

The Naturalist

February 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 02
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Furs from the [Department of Wildlife Resources](#) on display at the February HRC General Meeting, 02/12/25, by Claire White.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

By the time this newsletter gets published, we will have had the last board meeting of the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) 2024-2025 Board. As a team we have accomplished a lot since last April. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people on the board who have done so much for the chapter.

Thank you to those leaving the board:

Shan Gill has been a board member since 2020, serving first as the Volunteer Services Chair and currently as a member-at-large for the last three years. Over the years he has presented many ideas, information, and stories to the board. His input has been much appreciated.

Jim Leech and Tory Gussman will be leaving the board after serving as Basic training co-chairs, which is a huge, important job. They have coordinated and overseen the training of cohort XVIII and will preside over their graduation as one of their last duties. Tory used input from several members of the training team to help define what was needed in a new computer for basic training and did a great job with the grant application to Williamsburg Community Foundation for funding. Additionally Tory, Marie, and Brad researched and

developed a project idea to stock backpacks with wildlife viewing references and tools for distribution to local elementary schools, libraries and parks for a Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) grant application.

MaryJo (MJ) O'Bryan started on the board as Education and Outreach co-chair in 2022 and then accepted a secretary position in 2024 thinking she was leaving Outreach. When circumstances changed and we needed her to continue in outreach, she graciously agreed to do both positions. As secretary, she created excellent minutes for the general meetings to document proceedings. As an outreach co-chair she has done a great job coordinating many activities and events in the community and added the York County libraries as partners for us. When the CAR (Collections and Resources) moved to the storage facility, she assumed responsibility for it, and with Ron Hunt's help organized the collection and created an updated inventory of items. MJ worked so hard; we have to have 2 people to replace her! We are very grateful that she stayed on outreach for that extra year!

Thanks to those taking on a different role:

We have 8 people staying on the board but moving to different positions. These include *Shirley Devan, Judy Jones, Barb Creel, Marie Robertson, Ron Hunt, Claire White, Donna Benson, and Bill Weldon*. In addition to performing their individual roles well,

each person also contributed ideas and decisions as part of the team and worked on other board projects. With only 6 of us remaining in our current roles, the dedication of these folks to assume new roles provides continuity so we are not "starting from scratch" with a totally new board. With so many familiar faces in new roles, I'm hoping I won't call on the wrong person in our board meetings.

Thanks to those continuing in the same role:

Janet Curtis has agreed to stay for a third year as secretary, which is much appreciated. She has done a great job with the monthly board meeting minutes. She didn't balk when I asked her to include the individual reports as part of the minutes, even though it added to her work.

Adrienne Frank, Marc Moyers, Brad Glasebrook, and Michele Garrard are staying for the second year in their respective roles. They have all worked on additional projects outside of their usual roles to accomplish board business. I appreciate all their hard work and look forward to working with them for another year.

Before this board changes over, I wanted to let you all know how much I appreciate all the help and support you've given me in my role and all you've done for the chapter this past year.

Thank you so much!

Janet Harper, HRC President 2024-

Don't forget to attend the Annual Meeting on March 12th



We will hold our Annual Meeting at a different location this month: Quarterpath Recreation Center, 202 Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185. Join us at 6pm for a night packed with celebrations including the graduation of Basic Training Cohort XVIII, presentation of milestone and initial certification pins, and the election of the 2024-2025 Board. **Recertification pins** featuring the Clymene Moth, *Haploa clymene* (pictured left, designed by Rosalind Ilett), will be available for qualifying members to take home, and swag will be available for purchase

including HRC car magnets. *Dessert will be provided along with a water refilling station.* The Recreation Center is open till 9pm, so we'll have plenty of time to chat after the meeting. We hope to see you there!

Frigid February by Claire White

The Greater Williamsburg area hasn't had much snow in the past few years, but in 2025 local K-12 students have had 7 days of school closures due to winter weather. On February 20th the Historic Triangle received several inches of snow with [CoCoRaHS \(Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network\)](#) gauges reporting 4.2 to 5.9 inches of snowfall, with areas further south on the peninsula receiving even more snowfall.

Ann Jo Cosgrove shared a snow day picture from her front door (below, left) and says "I'm pretty sure those are deer footprints coming up to get a snack. We have so many deer in our neighborhood." While [Martha Moss' Flickr account](#) documents a snippet of the snowfall including a [White-throated sparrow, *Zonotrichia albicollis*](#), (pictured center, below) and a frozen Greensprings Swamp around a tree trunk three days after the snowfall.



On the Calendar

See Better Impact and HRC Google Group monthly Continuing education (CE) emails for more opportunities.

Tuesday	Mar 11	CE "Landfills 101" 6:30-8pm Webinar with Virginia DEQ Register
Wednesday	Mar 12	HRC Annual Meeting 6-8:30pm at Quarterpath Recreation Center, Room 2
Saturday	Mar 15	CE Nature Photography 10-11:30am at JCC Recreation Center Register
Sunday	Mar 16	CE Bird Walk 7am with Hampton Roads Bird Club at Newport News Park
Wednesday	Mar 19	CE Shorebirds of Virginia 6-8:30pm with Williamsburg Bird Club Hybrid
Thursday	Mar 20	CE Blue Crabs 7-8pm After Hours Event at VIMS Register, Hybrid Event
Saturday	Mar 22	Tree Planting 9am-1pm at James River National Wildlife Refuge Register
Sunday	Mar 23	Native Plant Potting Party 1pm at Etchberger's Home with VNPS RSVP
Saturday	Mar 22	CE Bird Walk 8-10am at New Quarter Park Binoculars available
Tuesday	Mar 25	Native Plant Potting Party 10am at Etchberger's Home with VNPS RSVP
Tuesday	Mar 25	CE The Language of Trees Talk 3-4:15pm at William & Mary Register
Wednesday	Mar 26	CE Gray Fox in Virginia 12-1pm Va. Master Naturalist Webinar Register
Sunday	Mar 30	CE Eastern Bluebirds 3pm with Judy Jones at JCC Library, Kitzinger Room

Weekly Wildlife Mapping: Hope to see you at one of the upcoming events at York River State Park (every Monday), New Quarter Park (2nd and 4th Tuesday), Greensprings Trail (2nd and 4th Thursdays), Jamestown Island (1st Wednesday), and Yorktown Battlefield (Last Sunday). Check email for any last-minute changes.

A Success Story: Osprey Platforms at Fort Monroe by Judy Jones



Last summer, in early June, Barbara Houston and I went to Fort Monroe with cameras in hand to try to photograph osprey and their chicks. It was a gorgeous summer day and the parents were very busily feeding their young as we watched (pictured top left).



Two weeks later we went back to the same nest and we were so saddened to see that a heavy wind storm the week before had damaged the platform and tumbled the nest to the ground (bottom two pictures). Fortunately, when it happened, some very quick action on the part of some visitors meant that, when the chicks were on the ground and still too young to survive, Julie Wobig of Tidewater Rescue was called in. The chicks were rescued and quickly sent to the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro. Sadly, only one survived but that young Osprey did well and was later released.



But the platform was still hanging by a thread all summer long and then into the fall. Something needed to be done soon. Now comes the best part of our story...it's November and then December, with all the complications and excitement of the season. Time is rapidly passing. Suddenly, it's January...the Osprey will return in March and the platform isn't repaired. And several other platforms need replacement. So, our challenge was to find the funding, get permission from Fort Monroe, buy the materials, build five new platforms, and find someone with a bucket truck willing to install the new platforms. It was a formidable task.

The team consisted of Julie Wobig (wildlife rescue and rehabber), Jean Troutman (another rehabber and a builder by trade), Jim Leech (volunteer builder and Master Naturalist), Joshua Green (arborist), and myself. Julie handled all the permissions and paperwork and coordinated the entire project. Jean gathered materials and, with Jim, built five new platforms. I helped by coordinating the donations from folks in the Williamsburg Bird Club, Colonial Nature Photography Club, and Historic Rivers Master Naturalists to fund the project (total cost of \$1350), and the wonderful and very generous Joshua drove his bucket truck down to Fort Monroe to install the new platforms.

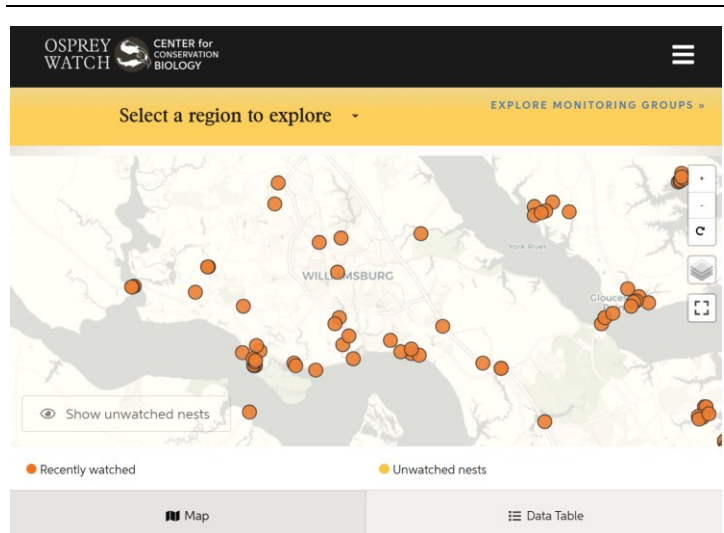
The installation was scheduled for Saturday, February 15th. Heavy rain was predicted for that day, but it truly was the only time when the entire installation team was available. The decision was made to give it a try. And Mother Nature



cooperated, holding off the rain until the task was done. Joshua and Jean went up in the bucket truck (pictured top left) and replaced two platforms. It wasn't easy but they made it happen. And then, they went to the third spot, the one with the dangling platform. And discovered that the bucket truck couldn't reach the top of the pole high on the ridge. So, Joshua, just such a dedicated and amazing volunteer, climbed the pole and set the platform right (pictured bottom left).

The weather's window was small, but the team made it work. That day's efforts were exhausting but Joshua, Jean, and Julie were determined to get it done. The project was costly, but your donations made it happen.

And so, this tale has a happy ending. Many, many thanks to all the folks who banded together to make it happen. And when the Osprey return in March, please try to take a moment to drive down to Fort Monroe and see for yourself the new platforms, the returning Osprey, and the success that can be generated when committed volunteers work together to make things happen.



Interested in Volunteering for OspreyWatch?

Volunteers are assigned a nest and spend at least an hour each week watching for specific behaviors such as building a nest, brooding, turning eggs, etc. Observations are then recorded on osprey-watch.org. Information entered in the platform is immediately accessible to users and summarized at the conclusion of the breeding. [Contact information for project co-leads Ginny Broome or Lisa Nickels can be found on Better Impact.](#) Binoculars are essential for this birding activity, and cameras are welcome.

Education and Outreach Updates

HRC Speakers Bureau

Check out the current list of FREE nature talks available to local groups and organizations on our website at historicrivers.org/hrc-vmn-speakers-bureau/. If you are interested in developing a 30-to-60-minute presentation let the Education and Outreach committee know, and please share the link with anyone who might be interested in requesting a talk.



Event Volunteers Needed

Several upcoming outreach events need volunteers. A minimum of three HRC members are needed for each event, with some requiring more. It's a great opportunity to connect with fellow members and learn more about a particular topic of interest in preparation for the events. Let the Education and Outreach committee know if you are interested in volunteering at an event this year, even if you can't commit to a date yet. They will help pull display and craft materials as needed from the CAR (Collections and Resources) storage unit. Bring your ideas and tailor the event to your ideas.

UPCOMING OUTREACH EVENTS INCLUDE:

March 20: Rocks and Minerals display at J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School STEAM Event with Marie Robertson. 2 volunteers needed.

April 12: Spring into Conservation 9am-12pm with the **Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District** at Freedom Park.

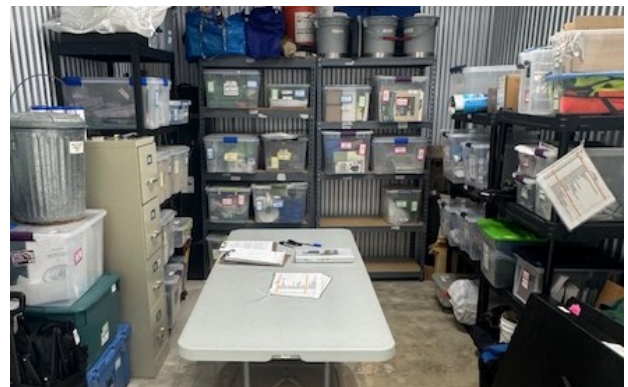
April 19: Movie in the Park 6-8pm at **New Quarter Park**. Children's craft related to "Protecting the natural world and wildlife" needed.

May 10: Mountain Laurel Festival 10am-3pm at **York River State Park**. Marie Robertson will lead the chapter booth.

Spring/Summer Farmers Market: Date and location (Williamsburg or Toano) to be determined.

September 27: BugFest 10am-2pm at Grafton School Complex. Planning and purchasing starts in early summer. Join the team now so your favorite bugs make it to the display. Read the article "Cicada-Mania at BugFest 2024" in the **September 2024 issue of *The Naturalist*** to learn more.

October 25: Paws at the River Market 9am-3pm with **Yorktown Market Days**. MJ O'Bryan will lead the chapter booth dedicated to Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation. More volunteers are needed.



CAR Outreach Inventory Complete and Online!

Ron Hunt and MJ O'Bryan concluded the Collections and Resources (CAR) inventory in February. They laminated copies of the inventory and placed them in the **storage unit (pictured above)** and the inventory has been added to the 'HRC Documents' folder in **Better Impact**. There is room for the CAR holdings to grow. If you are considering participating in an outreach event, check out the inventory, which includes hundreds of items in various categories.

Cohort XVIII Basic Training Finished in February

by Basic Training Committee

Cohort XVIII had four events in February to finish out their training to become Virginia Master Naturalists. The 10 hours of training was divided between virtual presentations at home, an in-person class, and a field day.

The month started out with guest speaker Mark Madison of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) speaking to the trainees and invited chapter members about the **History of Conservation in America** on February 4th. Emily Argo, committee member and FWS biologist, set up the virtual event which included a video tour of the museum at the **National Conservation Training Center** in West Virginia. 48 devices joined the Zoom.

Department of Forestry Community Forestry Specialist and Historic Rivers Chapter co-advisor Daniel Brooks presented on **Forest Conservation** at the Griffin Hotel, found at the entrance of the Bassett Trace Nature Trail on February 8. After the cozy indoor portion of the day the group headed out to the misty trail with Rick Brown, trail project champion, for a short, guided walk. The day ended with diameter and height measurements of the famed Shurcliff's Eastern Red Cedar, which is estimated to be over 250 years old. **The pictures below are from the indoor and outdoor portions of the field day.**



On February 18, Chuck Bailey, professor of geology at The College of William and Mary, taught the last class on **Climate and Weather**. Coincidentally, trainee Laura Grove wrote an article on Chuck's election to president of the Geological Society of America in **October of 2023 for the William & Mary News**. After class, the trainees were tasked with starting their 75 question Basic Training exam.

The month ended with one additional continuing education opportunity, an hour Zoom with Matt Cohen from the **Mycological Association of Washington D.C.** His talk was entitled **Mycology 101** and reviewed common fungi.

Many thanks to the 15 trainees for their hard work and enthusiasm these past months. We look forward to celebrating with you at graduation on Wednesday, March 12 at Quarterpath Recreation Center!








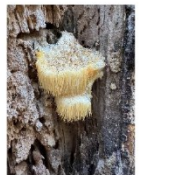



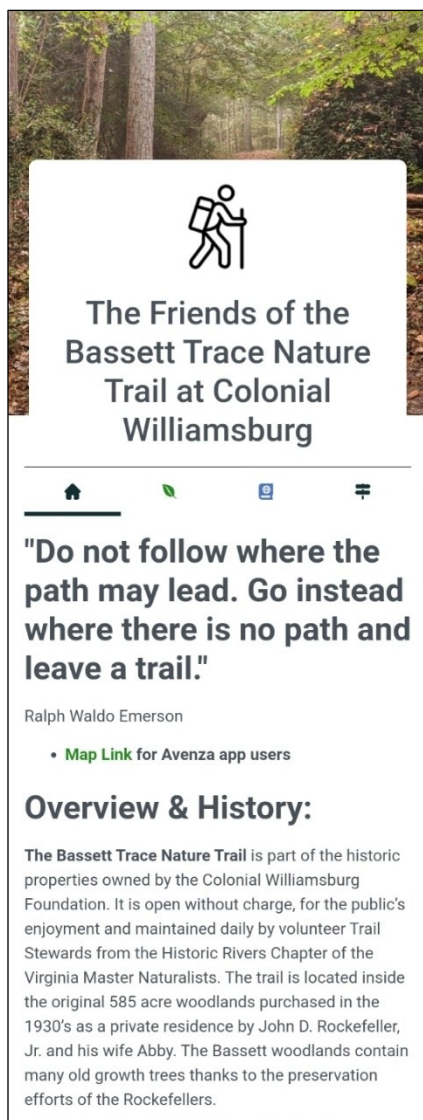
Nature Explorers: Spring 2025 Session Starts at Clara Byrd Baker Elementary by Marie Roberston



We had our first Nature Explorers club meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 25, during which we played the "Oh, Deer!" game to learn about how the deer population changes as a consequence of limited resources. In the following session, after an overview of the differences between lichen, moss, and fungi (pictured right), we will be doing a scavenger hunt in the woods behind the school. I prepared a handout using some of Martha Moss's fabulous Flickr photos to illustrate examples of the three types of organisms.

We have 19 students in grades 3-5, and 9 of the students are repeat club students who have participated in a previous session, if not all 3 previous sessions! Our HRC volunteers are the same as in the fall: Robert Ambrose, Sherry Brubaker, Cynthia Ferentinos, Bob Kaplan, and Jennifer Smith. Other topics for the spring include spring ephemerals, water quality (with Patty Maloney), reptiles, and bird nesting habits. For this spring, the students are divided into bird groups (cavity nesters, year-round residents, raptors, and wetland birds) with Inge Curtis' prints being used for their name tags (pictured above and on the next page). We have a great group of interested and enthusiastic students.

<p>Lichen is a fungi-algae 'sandwich'; the fungi and algae depend on each other and both benefit from the relationship (symbiotic)</p>	<p>Fungi are simple organisms, but are neither plants nor animals. Fungi feed off of dead (plant/animal) material; they are a valuable part of decomposition and returning nutrients to the soil</p>	<p>Mosses are simple plants; typically soft and grow in dark, damp places; make their food through photosynthesis; send out spores to reproduce</p>
 <p>Bush beard lichen on stick</p>	 <p>Crowded parchment fungus</p>	 <p>Moss on rocks</p>
 <p>British soldier lichen</p>	 <p>Turkey tail fungus</p>	 <p>Moss with sporophytes</p>
 <p>Lichen on bark</p>	 <p>Lion's mane mushroom (fungus)</p>	
<p>*photos by Martha Moss</p>		



The Friends of the Bassett Trace Nature Trail at Colonial Williamsburg by Rick Brown

I want to share with all of you a new feature that has recently been added to the Bassett Trace project that involves the cooperation of numerous volunteers over the past 6 years. We now have an active [Friends' webpage](#) (pictured left) that is a chronicle of the natural world that can be found on a visit to this trail. This all began as a Master Naturalist project in 2019 as our volunteer [Trail Stewards](#) began sharing photos from along the trail. We know that all Master Naturalists have the pathological compulsion to take pictures and document what they see, and so naturally, these 800+ pictures found their way into collections that kept growing over the years.

Originally the [Colonial Williamsburg \(CW\) Arboretum](#), of which the Bassett Trace is a part, created a webpage on a site hosted by PlantsMap, a cloud-based data storage website. This site linked to the CW webpage and had active links to the QR codes on the tree tags we see all along the trail. That worked pretty well so we began adding our collections to display on that webpage. However, in June 2022, PlantsMap crashed and for a time we had no access to our photos or data. Subsequently, the data and domain name were assumed by Plantsoon, another cloud-based web service based in Belgium. Very soon we began working with them to recover and migrate our data from their site to a new webpage dedicated solely to Bassett Trace. The result is that we now have recovered all of our original information, and we have begun adding even more features to make this an educational tool.

The new [Plantsoon](#) site is constantly being updated to meet the needs of users like us. New features are being explored to expand our footprint. Leisa Clark has single-handedly taken upon herself the task of identifying and documenting the native plants that flourish along the trail. As you hike along the trail you will see her handiwork in the small ground-level cards that identify the plants by common and Latin name. These signs appear, move,

and disappear just as the plants do. And she is constantly expanding her inventory. A new feature this summer will be the addition of QR codes on each sign that links back into the Friends' webpage thereby providing hikers with additional information through links to educational resource websites, such as the Virginia Digital Floral Atlas, Virginia Tech Dendrology, etc. This provides learning opportunities at all levels for interested users.

We also have over 200+ photos of birds, insects, mosses, fungi, ferns, mammals, and trail photos (pictured left) that we are working with the Plantsoon developers to be able to add to the webpage with data to expand the trail inventory. Storing our data in this way allows us to have a dynamic teaching tool that can be used by our members, casual visitors, and those whom we lead on the weekly nature walks led by our Trail Guides. It provides a valuable resource of the natural inventory of living things that can be found on Bassett Trace.

We now have over 30 regular volunteers who monitor and maintain the trail with scheduled weekly walks. There are 9 Trail Guides who lead 3 free **public tours** per week from March through mid-November every Tuesday at 9:30 AM and every Saturday at 9:30 & 10:30 AM. This fall Nancy Barnhart will lead monthly bird walks for any interested birders or others. Our project is a busy place and an opportunity for outreach. Stop by to learn more about the trail during one of these tours.

Use the QR code to the left or the website below to explore our new webpage: experience.plantsoon.com/visit/friends-of-the-bassett-trace-trail/

You will find descriptive links to the history of Bassett Hall and the surrounding woodlands, maps, videos, our collections, and of course lots of photos. The pictures you see on our webpage have been contributed over the years by: Seig Kopinitz, Nancy Barnhart, Claire White, Judy Jones, Leisa Clark, Jim Webb, Jim Easton, Glenda White, Cheryl Roettger, Shirley Devan, and many others, to all of whom we are eternally grateful. If you have photos of your discoveries on the trail to share, please send them to me. This is a true volunteer collaborative effort.

It is entirely possible that the Plantsoon website may also have application to other Chapter projects, such as wildlife mapping, trail developments, parks, bird walks, etc. The website is now being used by the Williamsburg Landing Arboretum, and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden at Freedom Park to store and display their own collections. I am also attaching a link to Plantsoon.com and would be glad to tell you how we are able to make it work for us if you think you have any interest in exploring the opportunities they offer for your own project. Remember, it's not enough to take pictures, we need to be able to also save and share them. Take a hike

Time to get back to the Brickyard by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis



Mondays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to noon, 990 Brickyard Road, Toano

With the snow, rain, and frosty temperatures the past two months, it was pretty easy to stay home in a warm house rather than driving out to Brickyard Landing to work. However, there is much to be accomplished this spring and everyone is looking forward to the blooms and growth that warm weather will bring. We accomplished so much in 2024, and it will be fun to see the fruits of our labor.

Starting March 3, we will start our regular workdays of Mondays and Thursdays. We will start the year working 10 a.m. to noon and will adjust our hours as the weather warms up.

As many of you have come to expect, we have seedlings arriving in March. We will add marsh mallow to the river's edge, sumac to the woods' edge, and elderberry to our food forest. We have a few other species to add as well. Remember that the seedlings are very easy to plant.

We also received a grant from the Ford's Colony Garden Club to add gallon-size plants to our meadow. This will provide larger plants while the seeds sown in December start to grow. People visiting the meadow will get a better idea of what the mature plants will look like. We are grateful to Ford's Colony Garden Club for its generosity. The plants will arrive in April.

Early in the season we will also add some tree protectors to the small trees we planted. Last winter we did not experience much damage, but this year, at least one beaver discovered our latest plantings and decided some of our trees were the perfect size for one of its projects. **We did some additional fencing in January to protect our larger trees (pictured above).** We did learn a new term and saying: Beyoncé Gardening—if you like it, you better put a ring on it.

We are hoping that work will start before summer on the paths in the garden. When the pathway work is done, we will also be able to finish our dry riverbed through a part of the garden. We also are in the process of bidding out interpretive signs, which will include fabulous photos from several of our members. We have signs for meadow habitat, riparian buffer, and native plants.

It is going to be a busy spring and we always need help. We love our stalwart crew to whom we are forever grateful, but we are happy to see you for whatever time you have to give. Come out and see the most beautiful spot in James City County. Bring a shovel and any tools that you might use to weed, plus gloves, a drink, and a snack. Waterproof shoes will also be needed these first few weeks.

Skunk Cabbage at Wildlife Mapping: Warhill Sports Complex

photos by Barb Creel and Martha Moss

Instead of the usual York River State Park Wildlife Mapping on Monday, February 17th a group of Master Naturalists headed to Warhill Sports Complex in search of flowering **skunk cabbage**, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, (pictured below by Barb Creel) amidst other winter species. The eBird Checklist for the day recorded 22 bird species during the 2 mile, 2.5 hour walk from 9:15-11:45am. Comments from the checklist say: “Sunny and 38 degrees with windchill 32 degrees. Visit to see skunk cabbage and wetland plants: mosses, lichens, liverworts, jelly fungus, Partridgeberry, Heartleaf Ginger, and more.”



Wildlife Mappers below: Kim Owens, Gary Driscole, Adrienne Frank, Dean Shostak, Ginny Broome, Babs Giffin, Shirley Devan, and Gail Peterson. Not shown: Martha Moss and Barb Creel (photographer).

22 Bird Species Identified:

- Canada Goose 2
- Gadwall 12
- Hooded Merganser 2
- Mourning Dove 3
- Killdeer 2
- Great Blue Heron 1
- Turkey Vulture 3
- Red-tailed Hawk 1
- Downy Woodpecker 1
- Blue Jay 1
- American Crow 2
- Carolina Chickadee 1
- Tufted Titmouse 1
- Carolina Wren 1
- Northern Mockingbird 2
- Eastern Bluebird 2
- Hermit Thrush 2
- American Robin 9
- White-throated Sparrow 4
- Song Sparrow 2
- Yellow-rumped Warbler 6
- Northern Cardinal 2

Closeup of Skunk Cabbage Flowers by Martha Moss:



Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond

VMN Video Project Contributions Needed

The Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) State Program office is working “with a videography company to produce a general video showing what the VMN is all about.” If you have photos, short videos, or are willing to help the chapter produce content for the project, reach out to HRC president Janet Harper as soon as possible. The deadline is April 7th. See details in the email attachment from Michelle Prsyby titled “VMN video project – your contributions needed by April 7.”



2/15- College Creek Litter —by Martha Moss

52 pounds of litter were collected in an hour. The next pickup will be on Wednesday, March 17th at 9:30am. **Pictured left to right:** Dan Foster, Martha Moss, Marie Robertson, Jeanette Navia, Donna Benson, Alice Kopinitz, Bob Ambrose, Gail Peterson, and Anne Annala.



2/15 Greensprings Litter —by Suzanne Stern

It was Big Stick day. The net attached to the long pole (along with a pair of knee-high rubber boots) allowed us to retrieve litter from the storm water discharge area and the wetlands area near the ‘long bridge.’ We can clean the stormwater discharge area in the early winter months, when water levels are low and vegetation isn’t high. Among our ‘finds’ yesterday were 12 tennis balls and other dog toys, a boogie board (pictured), a mangled tree identification marker, and \$10.05, which I put toward bird seed for my back yard.

Pictured: (1) Bob Kaplan, Judy Tucker, myself, Dan Arbegast, and Keith Navia. (2) Closeup of Dan Arbegast holding the mangled metal tree marker.



DWR Diamondback Dash Volunteers Needed

This is a citizen science initiative which utilizes volunteers to “adopt” and kayak a pre-mapped route three times a year and report back on their sightings of diamondback terrapins. Because terrapins are an estuarine species, we have routes available along the majority of Virginia’s coastlines that are suitable for all kayaking skill levels. The sampling period starts in early May. Check out the article “Diamondback Dashing” in the [May 2024 issue of *The Naturalist*](#) and visit dwr.virginia.gov/diamondback-dash/ to learn more.

Public Comments on DWR Wild Turkey Management

From March 6-April 4, 2025 the public is invited to review and comment on the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) 2025-2034 plan for the management of wild turkeys. Historic Rivers Chapter members Adrienne Frank and co-advisor Meagan Thomas were both asked separately to provide input during the drafting process. The draft can be found at dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/turkey/draft-turkey-management-plan/

Moss Appreciation Week —by Claire White

I heard an interesting 3-minute clip on NPR's [Weekend Edition Sunday](#) from February 16th about "Moss Appreciation Week" at Lewis and Clark Community College in Oregon. In light of

Adrienne Frank's recent [HRC newsletter article about the mosses she saw in January](#) it definitely caught my interest. This would be an interesting idea for an indoors Williamsburg winter outreach activity next year. What do you think?



Mayapple, VNPS 2025 Wildflower of the Year

The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) recently announced the Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) as the 2025 Wildflower of the Year. Check out the February 8, 2025 article at vnps.org to learn more about this distinctive perennial that grows in large colonies on forest floors. Featured above is the unripe fruit that forms after the flower has been pollinated (credit Claire White). VNPS will offer Mayapple artwork on apparel later this year.

Looking for native plants? Be sure to attend the VNPS John Clayton Chapter Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 3rd at the Williamsburg Community Building. HRC members can volunteer to support this event at potting parties in March and April. See the February 20 “[Potting Party Schedule](#)” email from Cathy Flanagan for specific details.



Helping Vulnerable Wildlife—by Linda Hughes

As a part of wildlife transport duties in February, I delivered some much needed supplies for [Maleena's Wildlife Rescue](#) (MWR) in Tappahannock, a Tidewater Wildlife Rescue partner. Sharon O'Neal, MWR, accepted the wish list items from [The Wes Strong Foundation](#).

Learn more about the Wildlife Transport approved project on [Better Impact](#) and at [wildlifecenter.org](#)

Photos: (1) Linda Hughes with trunk full of supplies ready for delivery. Photo by Kristy Spurgeon, The Wes Strong Foundation. (2) Sharon O'Neal receiving items at Maleena's Wildlife Rescue. Photo by Linda Hughes.

Inosculation Spotted at Greensprings Trail?

Jeantte Navia reported on February 27th that while Wildlife Mapping on Greensprings Trail, **Sherry Brubaker and Janie Moyers (pictured above)** “found these trees that had grown up together. They were so close, they were embracing. They actually were quite embedded into each other.”

Janie Moyers later learned that this fusing of the trees might be an example of inosculation. The [University of New Hampshire \(UNH\) Extension](#) reports that the natural phenomenon of inosculation “occurs when two individual trees growing in close proximity become morphologically joined,” resulting in shared vascular tissues. This is common among trees of the same species, but less so in different species. If not an example of inosculation, the trees pictured above may be a “false graft” according the UNH since the trees are clearly separate species.

Seaford Elementary School's Post



Seaford Elementary School

February 25 at 1:56 PM

Some of Seaford Elementary's 5th graders enjoyed participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count from February 14th-17th! 🌿 Together, they learned how counting birds helps our environment and their numbers were added to the global database to help researchers at Cornell Labs. 🌱

#SeafordElementary #BirdCount #NatureLovers #Education #Conservation



Seaford Elementary Great Backyard Bird Count —by Deena Obrotka

In early February, as a Seaford Elementary School Outreach partner, I organized in the **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** for fifth grade students. They were able to identify 23 different birds during the event. Visit the school's **Facebook account** to see additional photos. Students were provided handouts about the GBBC to encourage the kids and their families to continue their efforts at home.



Albino Deer Spotted —by Ann Jo Cosgrove

Many of my neighbors have seen her wandering with a group of deer.

Trex Recycling Plastics Pickup—by Karen Hines

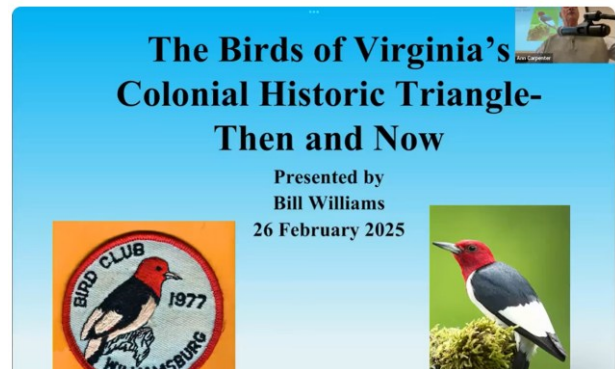
Hope to see you at one of the March pickups with squeaky clean, dry, stretchy soft plastic. Thanks for your patience and for your diligent work to keep recyclable plastics out of the landfill.

Wednesday, March 12 from 5:25-5:55pm, before HRC Annual Meeting at Quarterpath Rec. Center.

Wednesday, March 19 from 1:00-1:25pm at Francis Street CW employee parking area.

Tuesday, March 25 from 8:45-9:10am, before Wildlife Mapping at New Quarter Park.

Friday, March 28 from 8:50-9:15 am, before gardening, Freedom Park Interpretive Center.



The Birds of Virginia's Colonial Historic Triangle: Then and Now

In case you missed **Bill Williams' presentation** on February 26th, it is now available on the Williamsburg Bird Club's YouTube page. Bill is the author of an annotated checklist of *The Birds of Virginia's Colonial Historic Triangle*. The second edition was published in the fall of 2024. The Historic Triangle has seen 363 of the 472 bird species documented in Virginia due to its diversity of habitats along the Peninsula. If watched, this recording counts as 1.5 hours towards your Continuing Education (CE) requirements as a Virginia Master Naturalist.

The **Virginia Master Naturalist** Program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Interested Virginians become Master Naturalists through training and volunteer service. The program is jointly sponsored by seven state organizations including the Virginia Cooperative Extension and is based in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation within the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Learn more about our chapter at historicrivers.org

The Naturalist is the monthly newsletter of the Historic River Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalists. Other organizations may not publish material from the newsletter without express permission from the chapter. Newsletter contributions should be emailed to HRCeNewsletter@gmail.com by the end of the month. If you have a submission in the works, please notify the newsletter editor. Photos should include concise captions and credits to photographer(s).



Bonus pic: Spider ID from Feb 28, 2025 bluebirding box needed. To help, visit inaturalist.org/observations/264599204



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